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Representative Joy Goff-Marcil Files HB 553: Giving Flexibility and Financial Relief to Graduate Students

Tallahassee, FL— Recently, **Representative Joy Goff-Marcil (D- Maitland)** filed **HB 553** which will provide flexibility and financial relief to graduate students at Florida’s State Universities by waiving excessive postsecondary school fees to those students and grad assistants who have met certain minimum academic standards

“Graduate students at our incredible state schools carry the dual-role of being both an employee and a student,” reasoned **Representative Goff-Marcil**. “Our postsecondary school system relies on these students for proper instruction of undergraduate courses, as well as research and academic breakthroughs that keep our universities excelling and growing.”

Approximately 14,000 graduate assistants teach, learn, and are employed across Florida’s 11 state universities. **HB 553** stands to provide these students with fee waivers or exemptions from financial aid fees, technology fees, and capital improvement fees.

Members of the **Graduate Assistants United** advocacy group, both from the **University of Florida** and **Florida State University**, wholeheartedly support the legislation and its financial support to supplement stipends for teaching and research. “Florida does a disservice to itself by permitting its universities to impose an unreasonable burden of fees on graduate assistants,” says **FSU-GAU** in a released statement. “Many graduate assistants earn below poverty wages even before fees are factored in. They can then find themselves denied up to nearly a third of their income because they are forced to pay it back to the university.”

Representative Goff-Marcil’s HB 553 , along with **SB 176** filed by **Senator Janet Cruz (D- Tampa)**, will provide economic relief to successful graduate students across the state, expecting to increase competitiveness and financial investment in universities. “If our state fails to act and rectify this significant economic weight that is placed on our graduate assistants, we will continue to lose talented candidates to other states as they leave in search of greater support commensurate to the essential role they serve,” concludes **Senator Cruz**.

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